

Washington Transportation Plan – Progress Report

A monthly news service to keep you informed of new developments and direction of our update to the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP).

May 9, 2005

This edition of the *WTP Progress Report* summarizes another in a series of workshops held as the Washington State Transportation Commission and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) continue work on the Washington Transportation Plan update.

April 19 & 20 Workshop Summary

The demand-capacity imbalance on our transportation system is expected to grow in the future, leading to more congestion. Ninety-two percent of all delay on highways occurs in our major urban areas, especially Puget Sound, Vancouver, and Spokane where congestion is greatest. Congestion leads to lost productivity. The proposals for the issue areas discussed in this workshop are targeted at achieving better balance by maintaining flow and maximizing throughput, which in turn improves productivity. Read on to find out more about proposals for the **System Efficiencies, Bottlenecks and Chokepoints** and **Moving Freight** issue areas.

Efficiencies:

System Efficiencies is about getting the most value and benefit from the current transportation system. It includes a variety of strategies that keep the system moving and in good operating condition, and may generate revenue to help pay for capacity expansion. Strategies are also intended to move more people in reduced travel times and in fewer vehicles, encourage travel at off-peak periods, and provide travelers with real-time information that allows them to make informed decisions. The Transportation Commission concurred on the Department of Transportation's moving forward with the proposals below:

- Tolling – Study and create a statewide tolling system program to coordinate development and technology integration for all tolling projects.
- Park & Ride – Develop a set of policies, in coordination with transit agencies, to help guide the creation of a comprehensive park and ride program and define the state's role.
- Coordination with transit – Integrate transit planning with our roadway planning process to create efficiencies in congested corridors. Expand public transportation service, Commute Trip Reduction strategies, and HOV facilities in congested corridors.
- Aviation – Complete the Aviation System Plan, which will classify airports based on the role and airport service level. Performance measures will be identified to evaluate airport deficiencies, needs, and target levels.
- Highway Maintenance – Increase funding in order to provide basic maintenance at the current service level as the size and complexity of the highway system increases.

- Traffic Operations – Encourage programs to manage traffic, such as ramp meters, incident response, and traveler information systems.
- Intelligent Transportation Systems – Recognize the value of ITS capital improvements such as Transportation Management Centers to complement operations. These are typically small investments that have large impacts to move more people and goods efficiently on the roadways.
- Ferries – Continue strategies that encourage ridesharing by providing priority loading and preferential pricing for transit, carpools, and vanpools.

Bottlenecks and Chokepoints:

Bottlenecks and chokepoints are locations on the transportation system where geometry or traffic patterns contribute to congestion. Significant reduction in delay and restored productivity can be obtained through targeted investments at these locations, at a greater savings than full-corridor build outs. Traffic congestion is expensive; WSDOT calculates the annual social cost to be about \$1.6 billion in terms of lost productivity and goods delayed. The Transportation Commission considered these proposals:

- Re-configure ferry routes to add service, re-route existing service and add capacity to meet future demands.
- Work with rail interests to identify locations of bottlenecks and chokepoints on the mainline rail system. Develop a strategy to accommodate future passenger and freight rail capacity needs.
- Target capital and operational investments at smaller scale projects that reduce travel times and regain lost productivity on the highway system. Develop an approach for building out corridors incrementally.

Moving Freight

Efficiency and reliability for freight and goods movement is paramount to supporting the state's economy, its role as a global gateway, and for supporting the productivity of the state's growers and manufacturers. The Commission will consider these proposals as they move toward the WTP's prioritization process for investments:

- Reduce weather closures on major east/west freight corridors, such as I-90 Snoqualmie Pass.
- Complete the statewide Commercial Vehicle Information Systems and Networks (CVISN) and weight-in-motion system. These systems allow known, safe carriers to bypass weigh stations, reducing delivery delays.
- Address freight constraints on mainline rail. Future projections indicate there is not enough rail capacity on the current system to handle container freight entering the ports.
- Create fuel pipeline capacity and distribution alternatives.
- Maintain the Columbia–Snake River trade corridor. Barge transport replaces 700,000 trucks that would otherwise travel on the Columbia Gorge highway.
- Create ongoing funding for regional economic development & freight system mitigation.
- Address freight constraints on the I-5 corridor.
- Study the state's air cargo system.

What's ahead:

The Transportation Commission's WTP workshops will continue in May with discussion of this issue area:

Building Future Visions – What are the visions of transportation system futures that should shape today's planning to help create pathways to the future?

Also, in May, the Commission will consider the just-passed 2005 Transportation Partnership

Account in comparison with WTP proposals.

Coming in June: Workshops on **Economy** and **Health and the Environment**.

How can you participate?

- Attend your area's Regional Transportation Planning Organization's meetings
- Visit WTP on the Web: www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp
- Attend the Commission WTP Workshops being held at the Transportation Building, 310 Maple Park Avenue SE, Olympia WA.

To learn more about the WTP, ask questions or provide comments, visit our website:
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp/>